



## What is Solidarity?

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Team Leader and Minister for FaithINFO

“Solidarity” is a word I picked up as I became more involved in the work of justice building. No one ever defined it for me, but I extracted meaning from the contexts in which it was used. It expressed, in my earliest understandings, solid commitment to a cause or more specifically, the people involved in the cause or impacted by the injustice which necessitated the cause. I heard the word, though, used so ubiquitously, solidarity as social media reposting, solidarity as keeping people in your thoughts and prayers, that the word lost meaning.

When I was organizing in Charlottesville, VA against violent white supremacists, I was introduced to “embodied solidarity.” I first heard this from Dr. Larycia Hawkins, a womanist organizer and faith leader who organized with us in Charlottesville, the city in which she landed after being fired from Wheaton College [for wearing a hijab](#) as an act of solidarity with Muslim women who were being targeted in xenophobic attacks. Dr. Hawkins spoke courageously about the gospel itself being about embodied solidarity, willingly taking on the bodily vulnerability of another, unto death, such that our stakes are entangled. Yes. I see that in the Gospel of Jesus. What does that mean for us now?

As I have continued organizing, and growing in my walk with Jesus, I understand the call to willingly take on the embodied vulnerability of others as a demonstration of possibility, power and more. More than that, I have witnessed countless of people acting in embodied solidarity and it gives me surety that the Spirit and Transformative Power of the Gospel are at work in the world. Jesus willingly took on the bodily vulnerability of poor people living under a brutal occupation unto death. Now, when I see likewise action, I praise God. Praise God for the young and old [locking](#)

[themselves to construction machinery](#) on behalf of the vulnerable earth, which is also our shared vulnerability. Praise God for [students risking their education](#) and housing and futures to demand an end to genocide. Praise God for the [Apache Stronghold people](#) and those who have camped out on the land with them in the struggle to save a culture and a water shed. Praise God.

I now claim the definition of abolitionist organizer and thinker, Dr. Ruth Wilson Gilmore, who asserts that solidarity is radical dependence. Colonial violence and systems have effectively isolated us from one another and the more than human world, such that one living with a good measure of socioeconomic security in the United States is not impacted by exploitation and death that the system produces. There is not an embodied interdependence. So, in the abolition community, we know we must “build” solidarity. To build solidarity is to entangle ourselves more deeply in the vulnerabilities of the world produced by injustice. It is a Gospel call. It is our embodied witness.

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